



TOWN OF GRAFTON
GRAFTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
30 PROVIDENCE ROAD
GRAFTON, MASSACHUSETTS 01519
(508) 839-5421

RECEIVED TOWN CLERK
GRAFTON, MA
2023 APR 25 1 PM 12:06

MINUTES
SCHOOL COMMITTEE
March 28, 2023
Grafton Municipal Center – Room F
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Elizabeth Spinney, Chair
Amy Marr, Vice Chair
Graciela Vargas-Baker, Secretary
Laura Often, Member

Members Absent: Liora Bram, Member

Student
Representatives: None Present

Also Present: Dr. James Cummings, Superintendent of Schools

1. **Call to Order:** At 7:00 p.m, Chair Elizabeth Spinney called the meeting to order. Before beginning the agenda, Liz asked for a moment of silence to honor the lives lost and those affected by the school shooting in Tennessee.

2. **Public Comment:** None.

3. **General Business:**

A. **Student Recognition:** presented by: Margie Daniels, Executive Director of MA Partnerships for Youth Organization. Margie Daniels presented a Certificate of Recognition to a GHS Senior, Noelle Fiedle, who was chosen among 400 student entries from around MA school districts for a poster she created. The poster supports the organization's cause regarding health and safety for school youth.

B. **DECA Field Trip Proposal:** Dr. James Cummings asked for approval for an out-of-state field trip led by Mr. Maxwell of GHS. Mr. Maxwell will take 8 GHS students, all a part of DECA, to the DECA International Conference held in Orlando, FL. The trip is planned for Friday, April 21, 2023 until Wednesday, April 26, 2023. Dr. James

Cummings noted that the in-depth information regarding the trip was shared with the committee previously.

1. Elizabeth Spinney entertained a motion to approve the DECA Field Trip. Amy Marr moved to approve the DECA Field Trip. Graciela Vargas-Baker seconded the motion. No discussion of the field trip was mentioned. Motion carried 4-0.

C. NGES and SGES School Update: Julie Flynn, Principal of NGES, and Melissa Wallace, Principal of SGES, presented.

1. Julie Flynn began with updates from NGES:
 - a. Staffing Changes occurred:
 - i. Kindergarten Paraprofessionals have been hired (at both NGES and SGES) to aide with fundamental social-emotional skills.
 - ii. Mrs. Eknoian, a first-grade teacher, moved into the Literacy Specialist position to replace a teacher that retired mid-year.
 - iii. Mrs. Fletcher, moved into a Special Education role this year, from her typical first grade position.
 - b. The School Advisory Council is back into full swing since the Covid-19 pandemic. Julie Flinn mentioned the Council members: Kelly Carr, teacher, and Justin Compton, parent, who were present this evening; while Kristen Green, parent, was not present.
 - c. Envisions, a new Math curriculum, began this school year at both schools.
 - d. Star Assessments were also introduced this year in both locations, helping staff and administrators analyze the capabilities of students in math.
 - e. Freckle: a program through Renaissance Learning which continuously adapts for student practice in math or ELA activities, allowing teachers to spend more time helping students develop and progress.
 - f. Hegarty Program introduced in the Pre-K level at both schools this year to expose students to phonemic awareness.
 - g. P.B.I.S. (Positive Behavior Intervention Supports): a program run at both schools this year since both schools were accepted into the SEB (Social-Emotional Behavior) Academy. This Academy is put together by the Department of Education in collaboration with the May Institute.
 - i. This is a 3 year program to help schools with the ability to put together, implement, and fully run a Positive Behavior Support plan within each school.
 - ii. The program highlights the motto, "Be Kind, Be Safe, Be Responsible," in all aspects of a student's day. Lesson plans are created around what the motto looks like, sounds like, and feels like so that students can carry the knowledge across the entirety of their day. These lessons are shared with all staff in the building to create consistency and continuity for students (i.e. all staff use the same vocabulary and have the same knowledge of how to respond to a student and what to expect of a student).
 - h. The "Tower of Books" Challenge is now in its fifth year, and encourages the reading of books at home by students, or by family members if the

- student is learning to read. The class that was the first to meet the challenges requirements was given a reward.
2. Melissa Wallace presented updates about SGES:
 - a. Melissa Wallace spoke about the many activities and events she has participated in to build relationships with students, staff, and parents as their new principal this year.
 - i. Chalk the Walk: done by parents to welcome students back to school in the fall.
 - ii. Reading Time in August was held where she read to students so that they could get to know her before the school year began.
 - iii. Renovation of the front lobby to include GHS artwork, and a touch screen TV that can be used by Melissa Wallace to teach students or simply as a display of upcoming events and/or photos.
 - b. Special Events held to develop community building:
 - i. Oktoberfest returned this year with a great turnout
 - ii. Confetti cannons were used to greet the students back to school in September, which was a tremendous hit among students
 - iii. Global Play Day was held on a half day in February and both schools participated. The day was about playing games, and the staff realized many students didn't know how to play board games. The day also helped with basic interactions regarding taking turns, learning how to lose gracefully, etc.
 - iv. Community Reading Day was held in March where members of the Town of Grafton came into the school to read to students.
 - v. Curriculum Night incorporated a Scavenger Hunt this year to engage with parents more.
 - vi. 100th Day of School Celebration was held using glow sticks.
 3. Closing Questions/Remarks:
 - a. Laura Often welcomed Melissa Wallace to the district and commended both principals for their amazing updates, especially the usage of Freckle.
 - b. Graciela Vargas-Baker asked how they define, "Be Kind, Be Safe, Be Responsible".
 - i. Julie Flynn commented that it is to define the motto across the entire day, for example, "What does it mean to be safe in the bathroom versus safe in the kitchen?"
 - ii. Melissa Wallace commented that a specific teacher will be designated to teach the concept to the student body, and then each class will be taught using the same language and same message.
 - iii. Graciela Vargas-Baker then asked if this PBIS will be used to monitor students, make sure they're learning, and then form groups depending on their Tier Two support.
 - iv. Julie Flynn commented that they are analyzing the data collections, and working to use this data from PBIS to determine if support is needed for any particular student.

- c. Elizabeth Spinney asked if there were any challenges or needs, regarding resources or human resources, that the principals are aware of.
 - i. Melissa Wallace noted that she often commends the Grafton School District because they do a wonderful job supporting both the administration and the staff. She thanked the Committee, the taxpayers, Central Office, Jay Cummings for the remarkable support given to her, her school, and so many.
 - ii. Julie Flynn echoed this sentiment. And, with the additional comment from Jay Cummings, did mention that the teachers would be very happy to have shades in their classrooms. But, overall, she is pleased with the new addition of paraprofessionals this year, and how easy it is to work with the School Committee as well as Jay.
 - 1. Elizabeth Spinney asked the reason for the need for shades.
 - 2. Julie Flynn replied that one side of the school has windows watching all the different recess play that happens {i.e. distractions}, while the other side has the sun beaming in for a good part of the day.
- d. Amy Marr remarked at how much fun Oktoberfest was, especially since she hadn't been in some years. She also noted that the Fun Fair is coming up on May 20th, and how maybe the PTG could fundraise for shades.
 - i. Laura Often reminded everyone that Dr. Cummings will be in the Dunk Tank at the Fun Fair.

D. Teaching and Learning Report: Tracey Calo, Director of Teaching and Learning for the Secondary Schools, presented.

- 1. Tracey Calo began the presentation with an overview:
 - a. Focus this year was on removing barriers to student learning, which was done in three ways:
 - i. Looking at equity in curriculum: to include the narratives of people from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds in the curricula; and to disrupt deficit-focused narratives
 - 1. Equity in Social Studies: Tracey Calo read off summaries given to her by teachers who read books relating to diversity over their summer break. These summaries spoke about teaching History courses in truth is important, albeit difficult at times, but best done so in kindness also.
 - 2. Equity in English: student goals are to learn Identity (of self and others), Skills (to increase cognition), Intellect (to increase academic vocabulary and content), and Criticality (to help students explore power, equity and oppression).
 - ii. Looking at a universal design for learning: a framework in which teachers offer flexibility for students to access information, process that information, and demonstrate their understanding of that information. It's comprised of 3 components:

1. Providing multiple means of representation via: options for perception, options for language/symbols, and options for comprehension.
 - a. This was the main focus this school year for teachers to implement into their classrooms.
2. Providing multiple means of action & expression via: options for physical action, options for expressive skills/fluency, and options for executive functioning.
 - a. The GMS & GHS Principals have asked Tracey Calo to make this the focus to demonstrate to teachers for next school year.
3. Providing multiple means of engagement via: options for recruiting interest, options for sustaining effort/persistence, and options for self-regulation.
4. Tracey Calo then discussed how she did a sample lesson plan with GHS teachers over the summer to demonstrate this new teaching/learning aspect. She stated that teachers were to review their own teaching styles to determine what they were going to adapt in their classrooms once school began, and report back to her with a plan. The teachers then did Pilot Lessons with their adaptations, and evaluated the student comprehension and response after the lesson(s) were completed.
5. Tracey then opened the floor for questions/comments before showing the results of the new lesson planning done by teachers.
 - a. Elizabeth Spinney asked if any teachers gave “push back” due to the possibility of adding more prep time to the already loaded schedules of teachers if they were to implement this new teaching style.
 - b. Tracey replied that when showing teachers this new Universal Learning style, she showed them the connection between the multiple means of giving information to the cognitive sciences (how one learns) so the teachers could understand the importance of helping students retain the knowledge being taught. This connection helped teachers to understand the urgency of doing more prep work will benefit students in the first stages of learning new knowledge. The teachers also appreciated the idea of multiple choices of gaining the knowledge (reading, video, or podcasts) as it merely took their current method of teaching, and gave variety. There would not be too much shift in what the teachers were already doing. Tracey also stated that she let

the teachers know this pilot was risk free, and that it could fail, but that was fine.

6. Tracey Calo then displayed some of the outputs done by students of these lesson plans that teachers created, as well as the teacher's feedback on those lessons. Overall, the students and teachers came away with a greater understanding of the knowledge than in the past "fill in the blank" style lessons.
 7. Tracey Calo also explained how she is taking what the English Department is doing, and asking the Social Studies Department to implement the writing knowledge into their curriculum as well so that there is fluency across subjects.
- iii. Looking at the Star data and the potential need to differentiate instructions.
1. Teachers can look at the data taken from students performing tasks related to information that they learned, and decide if information needs to be retaught, or if a class needs to be regrouped so that individual instruction happens per group, etc.
 2. This is called differentiation: teachers design the right task for the right student(s) at the right time using readiness levels determined by the data in the Star Assessment.
 3. Differentiation is done using Flexible Grouping (which is creating instructional groups based on proficiency) and Tiered Assignments (which will vary the challenge each student receives with resources and levels of thinking).
 4. Tracey Calo then gave an example of differentiating an English lesson and how a teacher can achieve learning retention in students.

2. Comments/Questions:

- a. Laura Often thanked Tracey Calo for all the hard work. Laura then asked if the Equity in Social Studies has been implemented yet. Tracey Calo nodded that it has. Laura Often then asked how the reaction and learning have been in the classrooms?
 - i. Tracey Calo clarified that pieces of this new equity have been implemented. The Department is moving into co-planning teams, and based on what the teachers have learned, they're going to move forward with changing the curriculum.
- b. Laura Often also asked for clarification about grouping students separately from other classmates. Laura thought that education, as a whole, moved away from separation of classes, but wanted clarification on how differentiation will help students in general.
 - i. Tracey Calo explained that while we like to keep students heterogeneously grouped, because they learn from each other beautifully, there are times when it comes to standards of

comprehension in a given unit that grouping students into smaller groups is beneficial to ensure all students are at the same playing field of knowledge.

- ii. Elizabeth Spinney further clarified that this “separation” was done at the right time under the right circumstances, and done so occasionally rather than done so all the time.
- iii. Tracey Calo confirmed that this is done occasionally because it would be impossible to separate one classroom all the time and still keep up with state standards. She further clarified that she and the teachers have discussed this differentiation (separating into groups) to rectify gaps that impact a power standard in their curriculum or the students’ ability to move onto the next unit.
- iv. Elizabeth Spinney also asked if these grouped activities were graded assignments, or if it was merely to enhance the learning comprehension of the unit.
- v. Tracey Calo stated that the group activities were not graded.

E. Police and School Department Memorandum of Understanding: A memorandum of understanding (M.O.U.) is the relationship between the School Resource Officer and the Superintendent. This memorandum is not something that the School Committee signs, but the Committee votes on whether they endorse this document and want the Superintendent to sign on the Committee’s behalf.

1. Dr. James Cummings explained the M.O.U. needs to be officially approved by the School Committee, if they’re so willing. And, he briefly explained the M.O.U. in regards to the state putting out grants related to Safety and Security that require the School Committee’s approval before monies can be granted. This M.O.U. outlines the expectations of the working partnership and the communication between the Resource Officer and the Superintendent.
2. Elizabeth Spinney entertained a motion to approve the M.O.U. Laura Often moved to approve the 2023 School Resource Officer Memorandum of Understanding as presented. Amy Marr seconded the motion. No discussion of the M.O.U. was mentioned. Motion carried 4-0.

F. 2023-2024 School Year School Choice: Dr. James Cummings asked the School Committee to approve the opening of 5-10 seats at the Kindergarten level, and then open further seats as they become available, in the coming school year. This brings the total number of seats available from K-12 to 110 seats.

1. Elizabeth Spinney entertained a motion to approve the 2023-2024 School Year School Choice. Amy Marr moved to approve. Laura Often seconded the motion. Amy Marr asked for clarification that the only new seats to be added were in Kindergarten. Dr. Cummings confirmed this to be true. Motion carried 4-0.

G. Universal Free Meals Action Discussion: This will be removed from the agenda this evening because, as Laura Often explained, a couple of Bills that are in the House and Senate which the School Committee brought to the attention of the District’s

Representative and Senator have now passed. This communication between the School Committee and the Representatives were due on the agendas of the February 28th and March 14th meetings, which were canceled due to weather. Since then, the Bills have been passed at the Federal level, and there is no need for further discussion.

F. Superintendent's Report: Dr. James Cummings mentioned how well the winter sports season went for GPS. The boys' and girls' basketball teams made it to the State Tournament, the hockey team made it to the Semi-Finals, and Adit Yaki and Jackson Shea broke records for the track team.

1. Safer Schools Grants: the approved grant funding would go towards a new audio system for NGES for announcement purposes.
2. Bullying Survey: given to GMS students. Once the data results are in, focus groups composed of students will be organized to assess those findings.
3. Equity Audit Survey: the group holding the Town wide equity audit contacted the Superintendent's office to ask for feedback from parents, targeted students, and all staff.
4. GAIN Program: Students have moved into the fully-stocked facility.
 - a. A SEPAC meeting was held in the facility to demonstrate the completed building.
 - b. Chuck Brown, of *Bread Guy Breads*, has done a soft opening in the store portion of the new facility. A Grand Opening will be held in the upcoming weeks.
5. Questions/comments: Graciela Vargas-Baker commented that she attended the bread store recently, at 7am, and there was a line out the door. It was great to see such a big turnout already.
 - a. Elizabeth Spinney mentioned that the store is looking for volunteers, particularly retirees, to work the storefront.
 - b. James Cummings mentioned that GHS students are also doing internships at the store, as well as helping with marketing and online materials.
 - c. Laura Often noted how exciting it is to see this program come to fruition in such a short time (about a year).
 - d. Elizabeth Spinney, returning to the Safety and Security Grant topic, asked if the doors at NGES have already been updated so that the back doors did not need to be propped open during recesses.
 - i. James Cummings said he knows all school buildings have been wired to have "swipe card" access, however he will have to check to see if the physical card mechanism has been installed yet because these units were on backorder. He noted that while waiting for these units, to help prevent doors being propped open, staff are given physical keys for times that they need to use a door other than the front door. It may not be the most convenient, but it's a safer option until the units are delivered & installed.
 - e. James Cummings took this opportunity to mention the dozen, or so, "Swatting Calls" that the State received about two weeks ago. These calls are not placed to any school, they go directly to police stations. Due to the

Tennessee school shooting, there were another 10 “Swatting Calls” made just today (Tuesday, March 28, 2023) to various school districts in MA. He mentioned that is why the MOU and the strong partnership with the Police Chief, the SRO, and staff, is so vital. James Cummings followed the MOU protocol so that all were alerted.

4. **Future Agenda Schedule Planning:**

A. Proposal to meet with Senator Moore on April 11, 2023 – Elizabeth Spinney has made a call to the Chair of the Select Board to determine if starting at 6 p.m. rather than 7 p.m. would be feasible. There is a Student Advisory Council meeting at 6 p.m. as well. However, Liz is wondering if a possible compromise is to cancel the Council meeting; or if the School Committee members should split up between the two meetings.

1. Laura Often thought the option of splitting the members between the SAC meeting and the meeting with Senator Moore to be a good option. She also noted that feels as though James Cummings or Anita Patel should certainly be present at the meeting with Senator Moore even if the School Committee members are split.
2. Amy Marr asked how students are reminded of the SAC meetings, because if students cannot attend that meeting anyhow, then that will answer Liz’s question. Amy Marr also proposed that if either the Select Board or the Senator cannot make the 6 p.m. time change, that the SC simply start their meeting later and be able to attend the 7 p.m. Select Board meeting. She also offered to stay with the SAC meeting if 2 members were to be present there and 2 members at the Select Board meeting.

5. **Approval of Minutes:** Elizabeth Spinney asked if there was any discussion in regards to the approval of the minutes from 9/27/2022, 2/7/2023, and the 2 weather-related canceled meetings from 2/28/2023 and 3/14/2023.

A. Amy Marr moved to approve the minutes of September 27, 2022, February 7, 2023, February 28, 2023, and March 14, 2023 as presented. Graciela Vargas-Baker seconded the motion. No mention of any changes needed to any of the minutes. Motion carried 4-0.

6. **Financial Report:** Elizabeth Spinney looked for a motion to approve the 2 warrants on the agenda for this evening.

A. Laura Often moved to approve Grafton Warrant on March 9, 2023 for \$83,189.39. Amy Marr seconded the motion. No discussion of the warrant was mentioned. Motion carried 4-0.

B. Laura Often moved to approve Warrant #37 from March 16, 2023 for \$304,375.15. Amy Marr seconded the motion. No discussion of the warrant was mentioned. Motion carried 4-0.

7. **Policy:**

A. JICA – Student Dress Code as a First Reading: Elizabeth Spinney mentioned that the Committee noticed this new dress code policy only applied to GHS, and wonders if it needs to be applied to GMS as well. The dress code was displayed for the public. A discussion went back and forth about the wearing of hats or anything on a student's head. Amy Marr mentioned an edit to simplify the wording of clothing that depicts the use of controlled substances rather than listing items out; which will then cover any potential new substances that could arise in the future.

1. Laura Often made a motion to approve JICA – Student Dress Code as a First Reading. Graciela Vargas-Baker seconded the motion. No discussion of the policy was mentioned. Motion carried 4-0.

8. **Member Reports:**

Laura Often attended Community Reading Day, and the MAFC Leadership breakfast and she is now on the legislation committee. She hopes to learn more about Suburban Funding through the MAFC committee role. Laura Often mentioned how the schools were approved for some \$300,000 for nursing which is no longer needed. She said that Evan Brassard is advocating for that money to still be used for the schools, and to be put towards the ADA Compliance needs. She brought up the "Mean Girls" play coming up this weekend, as well as a Town park that was just built and is a wonderful place to attend.

Elizabeth Spinney mentioned that she also attended the Community Reading Day, and had a great time. It was wonderful to see so many in attendance.

9. **Correspondence:** none

10. **Executive Session:** none

11. **Adjournment:** Laura Often motioned to adjourn the session. Amy Marr seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0. The meeting ended at 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Jessica Fugere
Recording Secretary